



To: Members of the House Labor and Commerce Committee

From: Joelle Hall, President of the Alaska AFL-CIO

CC: Rep. Andy Josephson

Date: March 3, 2021

Subject: House Bill 45 - WORKERS' COMP. AND CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

The Alaska AFL-CIO supports HB 45 on the following grounds:

Protecting workers: Protecting workers' rights, health, and safety has been at the forefront of Alaska AFL-CIO's work during the COVID-19 pandemic. We strongly support this piece of legislation, as it seeks to address a glaring gap in workers' compensation. Frontline essential workers in the occupations this bill covers have guided our state through this pandemic. Some did not have access to adequate PPE, while others dealt with belligerent members of the public who intentionally flouted CDC guidelines and local health mandates. During this pandemic, workers in the covered occupations put their health and safety on the line with little to no recourse should they contract COVID-19. And we know that many frontline essential workers contracted the disease while on the job. This piece of legislation is vital for addressing future public health emergencies, including pandemics, and ensuring workers are adequately protected.

Standing up for the dignity of work: The frontline essential workers covered by this bill have gone above and beyond their normal duties in service of the greater good. Alaska has been hard hit by the pandemic, but were it not for these workers, it could have been worse. The State of Alaska must dignify their efforts by making sure their health, safety, and compensation are a priority. As we build back better post-pandemic, treating our most essential workers with dignity and respect is an important precedent to set.